Record Number Attend Hebrew Symposium

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Editor-in-Chief

A record number of students participated this week in Creighton University's tenth annual Klutznick Symposium, titled "Sacred Text, Secular Times: The Hebrew Bible in the Modern World."

Dr. Leonard Greenspoon, Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization, estimated total student attendance of the lectures at 400, compared to fewer than 50 in previous years. The Klutznick Symposium is a two-day event exploring issues relevant to Jewish cultures.

Greenspoon said the surge in attendance was the result of some savvy scheduling, increased accessibility to the lectures and an effort on the part of the faculty to encourage students to attend the symposium, held Sunday and Monday.

Greenspoon said students were consulted when planning topics to be covered. This year's sessions were arranged at intervals that made it more convenient for students to attend.

Many faculty members offered extra credit to students who attended the symposium, and others used it as a class assignment.

Suzanne Walsh, a secretary in the controller's office, said she attended part of the symposium because it was required for a world literature class she is taking. Walsh said she enjoyed the lectures, but doubts she would have attended if it had not been required for class, because the symposium conflicted with her work schedule.

A feature unique to this year's convention is a special exhibit entitled "The Binding of Isaac: Genesis 22 and Its Progeny," on display in the Lied Education Center for the Arts. The exhibit features the work of several contemporary artists using a variety of mediums to express the story of the Akeda, when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

The Klutznick Symposium was initiated ten years ago by the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization. The Klutznick Chair is an endowed position funded by a grant from Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick. Philip Klutznick attended the Creighton University School of Law in the late 1920s - an era when many schools placed limits on the number of Jewish students they would admit into their law classes.

Creighton had no such limits, and when Klutznick went on to pursue a successful business career, he established the grant to show his gratitude to the university.

The Klutznick chair is responsible not only for promoting the study of religion and Jewish civilization at the university, but also for working within the Jewish community of Omaha.

The symposium was an effort to fulfill both of these goals.

The distinctive feature of it is that the scholars come to talk not simply about one another, but also the general community - educated people who are not experts in the field, Greenspoon said.

The symposium is held each fall with one day of lectures at the Jewish Community Center of Omaha, and a second day at Creighton. Each year the symposium covers a different topic.

Last year's symposium centered on Yiddish and future conventions promise lectures on the establishment of Israel and the coming of the millennium.